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17 February 2005

IDN43398.E

Indonesia: Update to IDN43387.E of 10 February 2005, IDN43363.E of 2 February 2005, IDN43347.E of 27 January 2005, IDN43329 of 20 January 2005, IDN43304.E of 13 January 2005, and IDN43291 of 7 January 2005 on the impact of the 26 December 2004 earthquake (11-16 February 2005)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

The Security Situation in Aceh

In an AFP article, a rebel commander from the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) said that the objective in upcoming peace talks would be a ceasefire and reconstruction of the affected areas (16 Feb. 2005). The Indonesian president is also said to be optimistic and determined to end the conflict (DPA 15 Feb. 2005). The second round of talks is scheduled to take place the week of February 20 in Helsinki (ibid.; AFP 16 Feb. 2005).

Several sources reported that the relocation of displaced persons began on 15 February 2005 (AFP 15 Feb. 2005; AFP 15 Feb. 2005; AP 15 Feb. 2005; AP 15 Feb. 2005; DPA 15 Feb. 2005). Hundreds of Acehnese left the camps and public buildings where they had found shelter since the tsunami to move into government "barracks" (ibid.). The government claimed that reconstruction would not be permitted near the shoreline in the event of another disaster (AFP 15 Feb. 2005).

The Associated Press (AP) reported that the UN "welcomed" the relocation efforts of the government of Indonesia and that donors had started to redirect their assistance towards reconstruction (15 Feb. 2005). However, aid workers and human rights groups, such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Human Rights First, expressed concerns about the new infrastructures being too far from the fishing and farming jobs of survivors (AFP 15 Feb. 2005; AP 14 Feb. 2005). They also cited the presence of the military near the barracks as a problem (ibid.; AP 15 Feb. 2005).

A Deutsche Presse Agentur (DPA) article reported on "confusion" and lack of information about the relocation process (15 Feb. 2005). Prior to the relocation, the government had said that the relocations would be voluntary, but many of those relocated on 15 February were only informed the day before (ibid.).

The Distribution of Aid in Aceh

Sources reported on the gradual withdrawal of foreign troops (AP 11 Feb. 2005; Xinchua 15 Feb. 2005).

An AFP article reported that the medical situation is stable, "with no sign of epidemics" (AFP 13 Feb. 2005). The World Health Organization's special envoy is reported to have said that "[w]hile medical assistance was still needed, the main focus was now [on] rebuilding destroyed facilities and training new staff" (ibid.). This information was corroborated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC 11 Feb. 2005). On the other hand, the Xinchua news agency reported that a study conducted by the UNICEF found that "one in eight children in the tsunami-affected areas of Indonesia [was] suffering from acute malnutrition, while diarrhea, fever and coughing are also widespread among children and women" (11 Feb. 2005).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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